

Journey from prison to power

COMMENT by M. Krishnamoorthy

PRISON to Palace, PM for all is the story of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's turbulent, moving, bold and visionary journey from a village boy to the prime minister (PM) of Malaysia. The chapters weave through the intricacies of political challenges, repression, injustice, trials and tribulations. Eventually, Anwar achieved his childhood dream of becoming Malaysia's leader.

The book traces his rise to power, fall from grace and resilience in the face of adversity, including 10 years of suffering in prison.

Despite the odds, Anwar turned his adversity into an opportunity for growth, and his experience in solitary confinement led to brilliant, innovative and decisive thinking. He reflected positively on life and has returned to reset and refresh Malaysia towards reform, unity, peace and harmony.

The book details Malaysia's changing political history and provides insights into the events leading to Anwar's crowning glory. It portrays stories of hurt and healing, abuse and forgiveness, gloom and glory, and tears and triumph.

It includes narratives and articles that best describe Anwar as seen through the eyes of Malaysian writers and journalists. Anwar's struggle, journey and destiny are narrated through anecdotal episodes and the author's interactions and insights covering Anwar as a journalist.

Nov 19, 2022, marked a momentous day for people power as Anwar was elected as the leader of Malaysia in the 15th general election. It signalled the beginning of a new economic, social and political landscape under his leadership.

Anwar is committed to charting a future for Malaysians by promoting unity in diversity in a compassionate and moderate way. This book is an inspiring account of the arduous yet successful journey of Anwar.

Why write the book?

When I shared my intention to write this book, many friends came forth with several tides. I could not think of any title more befitting than Anwar's words: "Prison to palace, PM for all."

It is time to hit the reset button and look to some glorious years ahead. We now see some light after Malaysians wandered in the dark, intimidating wilderness led by backdoor governments (2020 to 2022).

At 74, people ask me: "Why are you labouring yourself, wasting time writing this book?"

My reply is: "Writing is my lifelong learning journey and it is necessary to keep me alive and away from friends and family disputes and anger, which can destroy my health."

I shut my mind against naysayers and kept

writing, rewriting and editing, sometimes into the wee hours of the night. I have lectured voluntarily as once the president of the I-Authors Club, guiding and encouraging aspiring authors to write books after having written eight books myself. Two of them were bestsellers.

As a journalist and professor for almost four decades, I often feel many things that are said are forgotten, and this is my way of documenting for posterity and follow-up actions by the Cabinet and other leaders in the government.

Anwar's mental strength and firmness inspire me because he did not succumb to the sufferings in prison, and the inhumane treatment in prison did not break him. He seized the opportunity to overcome all repression and kept his mind on the Reformasi movement. This is what I admire about him. Despite the torment and pain, he rose to the ranks of PM.

From his pain, suffering and bitterness in prison arose patience, tolerance and peace of mind.

However, the 10-year confinement was not in vain. Anwar engaged in reading and meditation, resulting in self-realisation and him transforming into a positive person.

Mind matters and by being present, he turned his life around. He felt bitter when he was first jailed but soon changed his mindset towards planning and promoting the Reformasi (Reformation) movement.

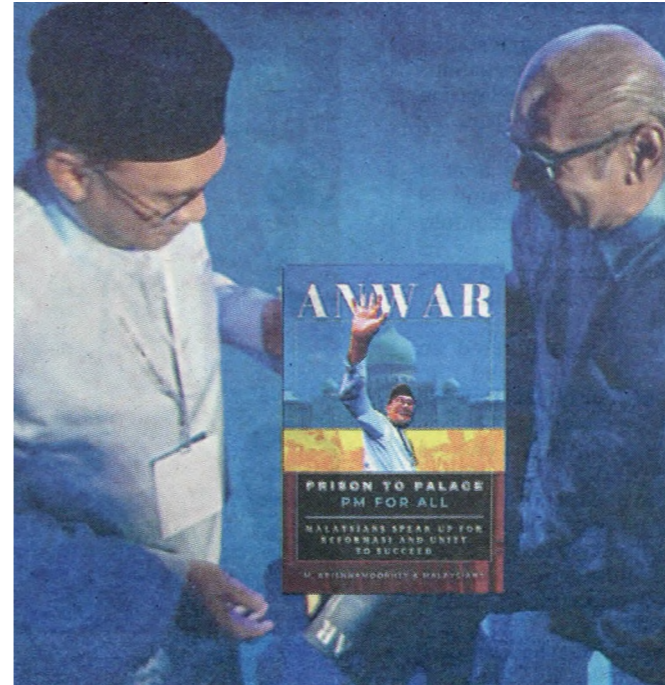
He reconciled with himself and thought of the nation at large. He gradually realised that Malaysians of different races were all the same and he worked on the brotherhood of man.

Through extensive reading, he learned that understanding each other's differences can create a more harmonious society.

The narratives and articles shared by Malaysians under the title *Anwar, PM for all* provide insights into the events leading to the iconic moment of Anwar's crowning glory. Nov 24, 2022, was the most important day of his political career when he was sworn in as the 10th PM. It was his final lap to Putrajaya.

Anwar is a man of great goodwill and the international community favours him. The financial market reacted positively to the formation of the unity government. The

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economy will be his top priority in facing a fierce opposition.

His elevation to the premiership caps a turbulent political life, which propelled him into the corridors of power and landed him in jail.

Noticeably, Anwar can handle stress with his ever-smiling grin while being calm, warm and friendly, shaking hands with the public willingly and happily.

He does not tolerate corruption and abuses.

We can rest assured in his fight against corruption. He has his work cut out for him. His experience, expertise and credentials during recessions in the late 1990s will be the guiding light in setting the economy right

Anwar is one of the few contemporary Malaysian leaders who enjoy worldwide recognition. In 1996, *Asiamoney* named him finance minister of the year, and in 1998 he was Asian of the year for *Newsweek International*.

With the looming recession bound to hit many countries worldwide, the new government cannot afford to make mistakes. Even Anwar is tightening his belt. He has no salary, new official car or renovations done to his office. Calling it a new culture to be practised by all, he said wastage must be avoided in his administration "because every ringgit counts."

All government money will be used in the best way to prevent wastage that had often happened in previous governments. Anwar's primary focus is on lowering the rising cost of living. He must face the challenge of providing

leadership and putting the people first.

His premiership is the culmination of a 25-year roller coaster ride. The firebrand former student activist was first poised to take the reins in the late 1990s after serving as finance minister and deputy prime minister under the nation's political patriarch Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad. But the two had a bitter falling-out over how to handle the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis.

Fast forward, on Nov 19, 2022, Malaysians took it upon themselves to vote with a conscience for fairness and justice, ushering a brand new world for Malaysia, and finally there was a light at the end of the tunnel.

The book also airs the views of Malaysians. Anwar is firm in charting the future for the people, and I write this book in gratitude to all Malaysians who rose to change the leadership to Pakatan Harapan.

Sadly, Anwar inherits a broken, disunited and economically distraught nation with multiple problems. But there is hope for the future with Anwar heading the government

I am convinced that he and his Cabinet will bring fundamental changes to a progressive Malaysia, with corruption being a thing of the past. Let us find our inner strength as we stand together as Malaysians and voice our constructive views to build a greater nation.

Say something, write something, break new ground and let us take charge of our future because no one else will.

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